

# four

# quarters

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# The Elevator Key

• Marion Montgomery

THE FIRST night Billy Olmstead went in on the graveyard shift he felt mighty lost. He joined the crowd of people streaming through the double iron gates past the night watchman and looked desperately for some sign that would point him the way to Number 2 Spinning Room. But he didn't see any. He followed part of the crowd up wide, creaking stairs and came out near a canteen, a counter where a man and two women were busy handing out crackers, stale sandwiches, and soft drinks. The hum of the strange machinery drowned Billy's voice as he tried to get directions from the man at the counter.

"What?" boomed the man.

"Number 2 Spinning Room?"  
Billy shrilled back at him.

The man leaned across the counter, looking in the direction he was pointing, shouting his directions and waving his hand to mark the invisible passageways. The work whistle blasted out the hour, and most of the man's words were lost, but Billy hurried off in the direction the man had pointed. The people who had been standing in clusters either made their way to their machines or made their way toward the doors and gates, depending on whether they had been waiting the starting or quitting whistle.

Billy suddenly found himself in the hot damp weaveshop where shuttles were batting from side to side across the huge frames. His ears could not hear the woman's

directions, but he made off again in the direction she pointed. Up the elevator one floor he came onto rows of machinery that must be spinners. There was more quiet here. The motors hummed and the cotton roping fed through the rollers to be twisted and twirled onto the spinning bobbins. The travellers speeding round and round the spool, guiding the soft thread onto the bobbins in smooth rings, made a solid circle of light.

A man came along the alley by the wall. "This Number 2 Spinning Room?" Billy asked.

"Yeah. What you want?"

"Where can I find the overseer? I'm supposed to come to work tonight."

"I'm him and you're late. I don't stand for nobody coming in late," the man said gruffly. "Come on."

The man led the way along the alley formed by the long row of spinning machinery and the wall of the building. At the far end of the spinning room he whistled shrilly to a man who was busy at a vise. The man came over wiping his hands on a rag.

"This here is the new sweeper," the overseer said. With that he turned and walked back the way he had come.

The man wiping his hands motioned Billy to follow. They walked along the ends of the frames, looking down the narrow passages the rows of spinning machinery made. It looked a mile down some of them.

In each of the alleys Billy could see women working.

The man who had been working at the vise was looking for someone, and in the next to the last alley he found him. He whistled as the overseer had done, and just as Billy caught up with him another man came out of the alley.

"Rogers, this here's the new sweeper," said the man, still wiping at the grease on his hands. "Show him what to do." Then he turned on his heel and went back to the work bench and the vise.

"Sure. Sure will," said the man who had come out of the alley. He was dressed in loose overalls, and his red shirt was dirty and wet. His full face and low heavy frame that carried two hundred pounds made him look something like a stuffed toad. The two hundred pounds, though not pure fat, weren't muscle either. He leered at Billy.

"I'm mighty glad to see you," he said. "I'd 'ave had to sweep tonight if you hadn't of come. You ever plowed?" He asked.

"When I was a boy," said Billy. He had been seventeen two weeks.

"When you was a boy!" Rogers looked at Billy. Billy weighed right at ninety-five pounds and he came a little taller than Rogers' shoulder. "When you was a boy," Rogers said again and hawhawed in Billy's face. "Well, come on, boy, and let me show you a new kind of plowing."

He led the way to an empty wooden box across which was sprawled a plow-like contraption. The alley-brooms had two runners which slid along on strips of canvas woven with short wires to catch and hold the cotton waste. It really did look like a plow when Rogers set it up on its runners before Billy. By

pressing the plow handles toward each other or pulling them apart, Rogers made an open wedge of the runners to catch the rolls of lint that collected in the alleys and under the edges of the frames. Rogers showed him how the broom worked. He ran down one alley, deftly scooping out the lint from the edges of the two frames, gliding past the feet of the busy spinners with a skill that proved long practice. When he got back to where Billy had been standing watching him, he gave the brooms a shove. They slid along the well-oiled floor toward Billy, swerved, and tumbled over.

"There you are, boy. 'Bout every two hours you need to go all over. Once a night you take this broom and go poking the cotton out from under there where you can't reach with this running broom." He handed Billy what looked like a small kitchen broom. "Then come morning before you quit, you sack up all the crop of cotton you got stored up and take it to the waste room. That's one thing about this kind of plowing: you don't have to wait long to get you a crop."

Rogers walked over to the section hand at the vise. Billy followed him, dragging the broom. "I've done showed this here boy how to plow these alleys. What you want me to do tonight?"

"Rest," said the section hand without looking up.

"Rest!" shouted Rogers. "Rest? You mean you're gonna let this here boy do my job and you ain't gonna let me dolph or lay up roping?"

"Rest," said the section hand.

"Be damn if that's so," said Rogers. He turned and glowered at Billy. Then he snatched back the broom.

"If you don't watch out," said the

section hand, "the boss is gonna fire you. He's had enough of your laying out when you're needed and your general sorrieness on the job. You don't straighten out, he's gonna fire you."

"You gonna let this here little snotnose work and me rest?" he asked threateningly. Billy's face turned red. He stood there awkwardly.

"You're gonna rest tonight, Rogers," said the section hand. "Now get out before they close the gates."

The big man turned, cursing under his breath, and thrust the broom at Billy too quickly for him to catch it. It bounced on his chest and he wrapped his arm around it to keep it from sliding to the floor. A dull throb started where the butt of the broom hit a rib.

"Rest. Goddamn it. Rest," said Rogers, shaking his head and walking off down the side of the wall toward the elevator. He stopped once and scowled back at Billy. Billy just stood there.

"Get to work," said the section hand. He didn't look up.

The rest of the shift was a nightmare. The plow-brooms had looked easy to handle when Rogers did it. Billy would get to going pretty steady down one alley, opening the runners to reach under the frames. But then he wouldn't close them quite enough to get past the evenly spaced legs which supported the frames, and he would run one side of the broom onto a leg and that would spin him around. Once he let the broom handle plow through the smooth threads of six bobbins. The spinner hollered at him and started deftly splicing the thread back to the soft stream of cotton which emerged from the rollers.

"I can't keep my ends up when

I don't have some tomfool sweeper coming along tearing them down, much less when I do. Watch out where you push them damn brooms."

Billy didn't remember ever hearing a woman cuss like that before. "Yes, mam," he said and pushed his broom on down the alley as slowly as possible. He went slow for the rest of the night. It got so he could squeeze past the spinners in the narrow alleys without hitting their feet with his broom and without brushing against them as he passed. All but one. She was about the biggest woman Billy had ever seen, and he didn't try getting by her but once. After that he'd wait till she went into the next alley on the other side of the frame before he tried to clean the alley she was in.

And the alleys just didn't stay clean. When he'd get through from one side of the section to the other, there would be great rolls of lint in the first alleys again, or bobbins somebody had dropped. Blowers mounted on tracks travelled above the frames in regular circuits, moving rolls of fluff from under the frames and blowing lint off the spools. Then there were the humidifiers that threatened to overflow. The roller-pickers who cleaned the intricate cylinders through which the fine finger of soft cotton passed to be spun into thread by the spindle's motion threw their waste on the floor. Between the roller-picker girls and the blowers and the humidifiers, the alleys seemed full of lint and waste all the time.

Billy noticed that none of the people paid any attention to him. They didn't even seem to notice he was new. The woman who had cursed and scolded him even acted as if every sweeper did just as he had done. That was a comfort at least.

He wondered what time it was. There was no way of knowing unless he asked one of the spinners with a watch, and he didn't want to do that. He didn't see a clock anywhere. Outside all was pitch black. He kept the brooms going endlessly and after a while he began to get tired. He noticed then that there were thin streaks of grey out the windows. He figured it must be five-thirty at least. He figured too that it was about time for him to start pushing the lint out from under the frames with the little black broom Rogers had thrust at him. When he got through with that and had swept up all the alleys it was good light outside. He picked up a burlap bag and began stuffing the cotton waste into it.

"You eat yet?"

He turned around to face the section hand.

"It's almost too late. Everybody eats when they find time. You'll have to figure out when's best. Got your lunch?"

"No sir. I was gonna get me something at the canteen."

"You ain't gonna make any money if you eat it all up at the canteen. Best thing's to bring your own stuff." The section hand was still gruff, but Billy could tell he was trying to be helpful. "Only thing is, watch that Rogers. He don't bring no lunch. He eats somebody else's. Hide it good. He don't bother mine. He will yours."

"You all let him do that?" asked Billy.

"We ain't got time to worry about your lunch. You watch that. Another thing, you're green and Rogers 'll work you every way he can. You get him good soon as you can. He won't bother you no more." He turned and walked toward the work

table and was busy at the vise again. "Been doing a pretty good job tonight." He didn't look up.

The second night Billy wasn't so desperate. For one thing he didn't have to worry about where Number 2 Spinning Room was. He was on time too, and he didn't have to see the overseer. Rogers was there to see which of them would work. He stood sullenly, one arm propped against the wall, waiting. As it happened, a dolpher was sick that night, and Rogers was given part of his work to try to keep up. He didn't do so well, but he did manage to keep Billy jumping since sweeping was the lowest job in the spinning room. By tradition Billy was the one to go to the canteen — for the spinners and dolphers and everybody else. Billy was sweeping down an alley just as Rogers finished pulling the full spools of thread off one side of the frame.

"Boy," called Rogers, "come 'ere. Take this nickel here and go get me a RC."

Billy took the nickel without a word, and when he had swept up the next alley and back to his sweeper's box, he threw his plow-brooms into the box and went to the canteen on the next floor, down the self-operated elevator, through the weave shop to the place where he had asked directions of the big man the first night.

When he got back, Rogers was waiting for him. He took the drink eagerly and drank most of it before turning down the bottle. He wiped his hand across his mouth. "Well, you're good for sending to the canteen if nothing else," he said. "Jest you do what I tell you and we won't have no trouble."

Billy still didn't say a word. He left Rogers standing there, his foot

propped against a box of roping, and went back to sweeping.

Thirty minutes later he went to get his lunch from its hiding place behind the section hand's tool box and it was gone. He stood there for a while looking at the place where the lunch had been, clutching his fist helplessly. Rogers must have gotten it while he was gone to the canteen. But Rogers was big — too big. Billy didn't say anything to anybody about it.

At seven o'clock he stuffed the waste cotton into a burlap bag and started for the waste room with it. He got on the elevator, pulled the gate shut, and started down. But the elevator had gotten no further than between floors when it suddenly stopped. Billy worked the lever frantically, but nothing happened. Then he heard Rogers' coarse laughter above him. Someone below yelled for the elevator to be sent on down. Two or three minutes later somebody upstairs shut the gate, closing the circuit. It looked like to Billy that Rogers had set out to make life miserable for him in Number 2 Spinning Room.

The next night the overseer sent Rogers out, and Billy had a peaceful night. By the time it was over he was an experienced sweeper and had even had time to watch some of the other people at work. Once or twice the section hand had called on him when he needed an extra hand working at a motor. The time passed quickly. The fourth night the overseer sent Billy home and Rogers swept. The fifth night Rogers helped lay the huge spools of cotton roping up on top of the frames.

That night Rogers made an effort to use Billy as much as he could. The big carts of roping had to be brought up on the elevator from the

twister room, and he made Billy help push them from the elevator to the spinning room. He sent Billy to the canteen again. And once he appeared worried about the operation of the elevator.

"This damn thing ain't working right," he told Billy, a frown on his face as he worked the control lever. "Here, you leave that box of roping there and go find the overseer and ask him for the key." He worked the lever several times. "We git this thing tightened up a little it'll work better."

"The key?"

"Yes, the key, goddamn it. And hurry."

Billy went down to the overseer's office, but he wasn't there. He started to forget about it and get back to sweeping. But there was no telling about Rogers. So Billy began to hunt all around the spinning room. He found the overseer in his own section. The grim man just looked at Billy coldly for a moment when Billy made his request. Then he said, "Somebody's pulling your leg, boy. You spend less time running errands and more time keeping your floors clean."

Billy went back to his sweeping, anger and shame making his face glow. He had been warned about Rogers and tricked by him before, and he let himself in for it again. The next time he ran into Rogers, Rogers pointed a finger at him and doubled up with laughter. Billy tried to pay no attention to him, but the rest of that night was pretty miserable. Rogers made it a point to tell everybody in the section, and Billy could see faint smiles on everyone's face, even on the section hand's.

The next night Billy rested. He didn't know whether it was because

of the elevator key or not. He wondered the following night as he made his way into the mill gates with the multitude of people whether he would lose his job on account of Rogers. Rogers would profit by it because the only way Rogers could hold the job regularly was for Number 2 Spinning Room to have a shortage of help. That night was Friday, and the dolpher was out sick again, so Billy and Rogers both worked.

This time Billy picked a less obvious place to hide his lunch. He had it wrapped with newspaper and stuffed into a brown bag, and the whole thing he stuck down into one corner of his waste box and pulled cotton over it. Then he went about his business. About three-thirty he finished a round of his section and went to get his lunch. It was gone. Tears of anger came into his eyes, and he picked up an empty roping spool and went looking for Rogers. When he found Rogers, he walked up to him and grabbed him by the arm. Rogers turned around.

"You stealing bastard," said Billy. "I'm a good mind to knock you in the head with this spool, stealing my lunch."

Rogers grappled the spool away from Billy and slapped him across the mouth just as the section hand came around the frames. The section hand stepped between them.

"What the hell is this all about?" he said, glaring at Rogers.

"This little snotnose called me a stealing bastard," said Rogers. "Said he was gonna hit me with that spool. I ain't gonna take that."

"That right?" asked the section hand, turning to Billy.

"Yes, sir."

"What did he steal?"

"My lunch," said Billy defiantly.

"This makes the second time."

"You see him get it or eat it?"

"No sir."

The section hand turned to Rogers. "All right, Rogers, you go on about your business. Billy, you come with me."

Billy, trembling, followed him out of the alley and over to the work bench where he was filing at a gear shaft. He didn't look at Billy, and Billy stood there staring at the floor.

"What you mean accusing Rogers of getting your lunch if you didn't see him?"

"I know he got it."

"You didn't see him."

"I know he got it, though."

"Well, you recollect I told you you'd have to watch out about your lunch because we don't have time to worry about it for you. I didn't mean I wanted any fighting up here. That's a good way to get fired. You understand? I don't want no fighting. You can fight all you want to outside, but you start a fight up here again and I'm going to fire you. You understand?"

"Yes sir."

"And I wouldn't advise you to fight him outside. He's three times as heavy as you if you was wringing wet. Now get on back to work and behave yourself."

Billy turned to get his broom.

"You got any money?"

"I got enough to go to the canteen," Billy lied.

"All right. Get on back to work then."

The first chance Billy had he went down stairs to the men's room. He felt sick at his stomach and he wanted to cry. He washed his face in cold water, sloshing it all over him. Then he went back upstairs. He avoided Rogers the rest of the night. One of them surely would

have to go. Billy turned the problem over and over in his mind, but he couldn't figure what he could do to keep Rogers off his neck and stop him from eating his lunches. Apparently Rogers knew every hiding place, and it was just a matter of time before he found each new one.

When the quitting whistle sounded, Billy went hurriedly toward the gate. But Rogers was there before him. Billy didn't look at him. He walked past, his stomach a tight knot. When he got even, Rogers grabbed him by the arm and snatched him around. Billy's lip quivered.

"Boy," said Rogers, "the next time anything like that happens I'm gonna stomp the pure-t-turkey out of you." He turned Billy's arm loose and walked off.

On the way home, after he got over his shame and humiliation a little and there was only the anger left, Billy thought of the croton oil. When he made his lunch the next night, he put gooseliver that he had bought especially for the sandwich on thick pieces of bread covered liberally with mayonnaise. Then he sprinkled on the crotin oil he had bought at the drug store. He put some pickles in the sandwich to disguise the taste and then wrapped it carefully. He made a separate lunch for himself and marked it on the bottom with a pencil.

But that night Billy was sent home. That was all right. He felt he could afford to wait his chance now. The next night he had better luck since both he and Rogers worked. Billy ate his lunch down in the twister room as soon as he saw that Rogers was going to work, and then he planted the crotin oil sandwich in his waste box. All that night he kept an eye on Rogers.

Rogers didn't bother him any, and Billy wondered whether the section hand had gotten on him too.

Billy checked to see if the lunch was there every time he came back to empty his broom. Rogers was a sly thief, and Billy couldn't stand and watch all night. So he checked as often as he came back to the box. About three o'clock when Billy felt for the lunch it was gone. His heart beat faster. He didn't know whether he was thrilled or scared, but he kept an eye on Rogers. About four-thirty he saw Rogers make a bee-line for the elevator, and he knew he was hooked. Ten minutes later Rogers was back looking white and worried. Five minutes later he headed for the elevator and the men's room again, and this time Billy was right behind him, keeping hidden behind the frames as he went. Rogers was almost running by the time he got to the elevator, and Billy brushed past spinners and other people in the alley too rapidly to hear their words of reproof at his recklessness. Rogers closed the gate of the elevator and started down.

Billy timed it perfectly. Just as the top of the elevator got even with the floor, he raised the gate two inches, breaking the connection and stalling the elevator between floors. Then he leaned on the UP button as if he were bringing the elevator up. He looked around, but no one had seen.

Rogers had begun to yell by then, but the machinery made so much noise that only Billy, standing immediately above him, could hear.

"It's gonna be too late," yelled Rogers desperately from the darkness. "Somebody better let that gate down!" His voice turned from a threat to a plea.

"That you, Jack?" he called. "Billy?"

Billy felt relieved to know that there were others Rogers suspected. He must suspect Billy eventually because it had been his lunch, and that worried Billy.

The pleading and threatening went on while Billy looked cautiously around, fearing someone would come to use the elevator too soon. Finally Rogers was silent. Then Billy heard him begin swearing softly. Billy left the elevator just as the new sweeper from the next section came dragging a burlap bag of waste toward the elevator. "It don't work," he said to the new sweeper, motioning his head toward the elevator. "I'm looking for the overseer now."

"What's the matter with it?"

"Too tight," said Billy. He thought a minute. "I'll tell you what," said Billy, "you go look for him down toward his office and I'll look up here on this end."

The new sweeper dragged the bag of waste against the wall and started off. He turned around. "What'll I tell him?" he asked.

"Tell him you want the elevator key," said Billy.

The sweeper started off toward the office.

"And hurry," Billy called after him. Then he went back to his section to wait, hoping the section hand would let him lay up roping when Rogers went home.

## Ostia

● Geoffrey Johnson

Absolute silence but for steps of me  
 And you, and sighings of Tyrrhenian sea  
 Peopled the mighty port now floored with silt  
 That Time the spoiler with his tides had spilt.  
 Gone were the Roman, Vandal, Goth, and Gaul,  
 Hidden the landing-stairs of Pompey and Paul;  
 Roofless the houses, yet alive were they,  
 Vermilion-fresh as if built yesterday.

We were the ghosts in strange dimension lost,  
 The sole sleepwalkers in that sleeping host,  
 Until a sudden finger twanged the harp  
 Inside us with a sorrow new and sharp,  
 A sorrow new, yet ancient as mankind.  
 It was the worn stone chapel weed-entwined  
 That Saint Augustine raised in a far year  
 For Monica, his mother, dying here  
 Brought back so sharply memories of our own.  
 And passing on, as he had passed, alone  
 With his own grief, we felt that city stir  
 And shine with hope beyond the sepulchre.



MARY THE INMACULATE QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE  
Ivan Mestrovic

Warren Reynolds

THE "NEW ST. JOHNS"  
Marcel Breuer



# The "New St. John's" and The Meaning of Orientation

● Ade Bethune

WHEN THEY are in college, our grandchildren will think of us as hopeless "fuddy-duddies." We are resigned to that. We thought the same of our forebears. What is harder to take is that our daring, crisp, modern buildings may seem insipid and shabby — in fact, "disgustingly twentieth-century" — to those young upstarts. Much of our life will then have vanished. But our buildings will still be standing, to irritate their new inhabitants struggling to live, work, and worship in them.

There will be exceptions, of course. Even today there are. Even today, an occasional building of the "Roaring Twenties" still seems good for us to live in. Despite its styling (and plumbing) we are willing to accept it, provided it was originally conceived along rather universal lines. If the relic can successfully be adapted to our lives and we to it, then we have proof that its human qualities are enduring.

May we hope that this will be the case with the "New St. John's." It is just a hundred years since a first group of five monks came to Minnesota, to establish there a new community under the ancient rule of St. Benedict. During that time, St. John's Abbey has grown to vast proportions (including a university, major diocesan seminary, publishing house, etc.) and, like every similar institution, it has also acquired a random assortment of buildings. Topsy-like, these various structures seem to have sprouted here and there with no special concern for order. Today their common focal points are, in fact, the boiler room and power house, whence the riches of heat and light are conducted to all quarters.

Now, there is no reason why the radiating power of Christ's life in the fabric of the monastic community should not be equally well expressed in brick and mortar. Back in 1924, Father Virgil Michel had first bemoaned the haphazard growth of St. John's buildings and urged the adoption of a master plan, even if it took a hundred years to materialize it. So, in the early fifties, when sheer overcrowding was forcing new expansion, it was time to take a critical look at the existing buildings and to analyze the best ways and means of bringing a certain order into the general plan.

It is here that the monks of St. John's blazed a new trail. Instead of hiring a local architect to add still another building to their collection, they decided to contact twelve internationally renowned men. To each of these, the abbot wrote in March, 1953, extending an invitation to visit St. John's with a view to undertaking a hundred-year overall plan, including a new

abbatial church. The architects' response was heartening. All were interested, even those who could not accept. Of those who did visit the abbey, the man who was finally chosen by the community was Marcel Breuer.

Mr. Breuer, Bauhaus trained, came to the United States in the thirties. Having worked with Gropius, he was well grounded in the school of "functionalism." How functional this school is, may sometimes be open to question. But, at any rate, for the first time in the history of the United States, a great Catholic institution was entering into collaboration with a famous modern architect to redesign its entire physical plant.

How Mr. Breuer's ideas evolved as he worked with the monks, how he presented them with a daring program for nineteen new buildings, and how, despite some serious defects still inherent in the plan, much has already been accomplished, is outlined in *Adventure in Architecture — Building the New St. John's* by Whitney S. Stoddard.

It is not often that a book is published about a building project still mostly in the blueprint stage; yet Mr. Stoddard's painstaking documentation on the history of St. John's, and especially of the present Breuer project, forms an objective historical study of real value. Without it, fruitful discussion would not be possible. And because the "New St. John's" is making such an impression that it will doubtless be widely copied, it should also be widely and frankly discussed, else its misconceptions will be reproduced for centuries. In his publication of the facts, therefore, the author has rendered a real service.

Less useful, however, are Mr. Stoddard's gratuitous aesthetic judgments based on his subjective tastes. For him, everything is wonderful! An approach so sentimental serves only to put the reader on his guard and to point up the liturgical and artistic defects of the plan. For even St. John's 1957 revisions still fall short of the fullness of meaning latent in the project. This is especially true of the church.

Yet the church floor plans are good — well worth study and imitation by other architects. The main idea for these plans first took shape in 1948, when Father H. A. Reinhold built a modest parish church in Sunnyside, Washington. In it he pioneered a 3-D expression of the "font and altar polarity of Christian life." Centrally placed at the foot of the church, the font was built on the same axis as the altar at the head. An invisible straight line connects the two and draws the observer from font to altar. The pastor hardly needs to explain the relationship of Holy Baptism to the Blessed Eucharist — the architecture clearly proclaims it.

The "New St. John's" follows the same scheme, but enriched with a separate baptistry attached to the church and serving appropriately as its entrance. Indeed, Holy Baptism is the entrance into Christian life. Further, the symbolic and practical values of the ancient Roman atrium are here preserved and adapted to the northern climate. One would, however, like to see this entrance enlarged to include a "court of the penitents." Too often, confessionalists are tucked like closets into unwanted corners, with no particular concern for their dignity nor for the traffic problems that they pose. Here would be a real opportunity for a more purposeful arrangement to bring out the juridical majesty of the sacrament.

On the same line as the font, the altar is planned, facing the people.

Around three sides of it, the monastic community is grouped, with the abbot in the central position at the end of the main axis. When, surrounded by his family of monks, he celebrates the eucharistic sacrifice, the abbot will proceed straight from his throne to face his congregation. The widening trapezoid seating area will permit 1700 people to have a close and unobstructed view of the sacrifice at the altar. No arrangement could be more beautiful or practical and more truly traditional.

Nowhere in Mr. Stoddard's book, however, is any mention made of the tabernacle. Where do the monks intend to place it? Do they plan for the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in a separate chapel? The book does not say. In a church where the altar faces the congregation there must, according to the Sacred Congregation of Rites Decree of June 1, 1957, be another altar — or a separate chapel with its own altar — for the tabernacle. This must be in a place suitable for the private veneration of the Blessed Sacrament apart from Holy Mass. Would it not be possible in the "New St. John's" to place this altar of reservation in a noble, raised position, accessible by two flights of steps, above the abbot's throne and dominating the whole church?

Even so, it still remains necessary to direct a primary attention upon the altar of sacrifice which faces the people. Here, it has long seemed to me that a further study of lighting is needed than is apparent in the plans published so far. Christ, the light of the world, came down from heaven to take our nature and save us. This is the chief fact of our faith. How can it be better expressed than by a great source of supernal light descending like a shaft upon the altar below? Thus shall the Lord "look down with gracious countenance" upon our offerings, and accept them with the same fatherly love with which He, long ago, received the gifts of Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech.

In answer to some suggestions<sup>1</sup> and requests for such a three-dimensional expression of God's coming down to us, Mr. Breuer subsequently added to his plans a small lantern over the altar. Certainly this is the first step in the right direction. Still, to my mind, it falls short of what the great "eye" of light implies. High up, circular if possible, it should seem to be the only source of illumination. Its light should be brilliant, indirect, and undifferentiated. Neither tree, nor landscape, nor ebon sky should be visible through it, but only "light." That there exist few ancient precedents of central light over the altar is no objection. Today's techniques make possible a design which could only be groped for in earlier buildings.

Great architects of the past did, however, avail themselves with success of another aspect of light, one which has also been insufficiently exploited so far in the "New Saint John's" — in fact, in almost every new church — and that is orientation.

Christ is, in His own words, the light of the world. He is also the One who rose again from the dead, and His rising is the basis of our faith, the power of our baptism. Now, there is in nature no more telling image of

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<sup>1</sup> Ade Bethune, "The Church as Mother in Architecture," *Catholic Property Administration* (July-August, 1956), p. 55.

baptismal rebirth and resurrection than the rising of the morning sun in splendor in the East.

So well was this understood by the first Christians that they naturally turned to the East to pray — not to Jerusalem, but to the East. Over St. Peter's tomb, altar has been built upon altar since early days, but the tradition remains unbroken. Today, the bishop of Rome still faces East as he officiates at his papal altar, *versus populum*. The facade of the basilica — whatever its artistic merit — is beautifully drenched in the morning sun. So is the mother of the churches of Rome, the Lateran basilica, and so, still, are a number of the earliest titular churches.

So also were St. Paul's and San Lorenzo, until they grew too small. Because a road was in the way in one case and a mountain in the other, it was impossible to enlarge them. In both instances, therefore, an addition had to be built at the West. Yet the celebrant retained his former position — facing the ancient small church and the East. The best he could manage then was to turn around, from time to time, as he greeted the people — "Dominus vobiscum" — in a gesture to include in the action taking place at the East the overflowing crowds at the West. Throughout medieval Europe the latter custom somehow came to prevail, and churches thus were built directly with their entrance at the setting sun instead of at the East. But even there, the idea was still for the priest at the altar to look towards the Orient.

That Mr. Breuer is sensitive to the sun's movement has already been successfully demonstrated at St. John's. When the first of the new buildings — the monastic wing — was erected in 1955, it was not without careful study of "sun penetration into the rooms at various times of day and in different seasons." This makes his neglect of the sun as an element in the church plan all the more surprising. As a consequence, the whole question of orientation — with its poetic, its practical, its scientific, its psychological overtones — on which wise men have pondered for centuries, is given but a cursory treatment by Mr. Stoddard. He offers no valid excuse for the new abbatial church being turned in a northward direction to face a prosaic gymnasium, instead of the rising sun. Never does he advert to the efforts spent in the days before the bull-dozer, efforts which leveled hills and valleys — as Constantine did on the Vatican — in order to orient a church upon a meaningful place. Yet if, today, psychiatry is doing nothing else, it is making clear that subconscious symbols are deeply imbedded in the human being. True Christian symbolism is so universal that it speaks to the sub-rational as well as to the rational part of man. The symbolism of the Liturgy is of this sort. And it is from its deepest and highest poetry that sacred architecture takes its power.

The present St. John's Church, which is to be torn down after the new one is built, is certainly too small. And its narrow, inflexible plan makes it unadaptable to choral recitation of the divine office or to the emphasis on Holy Mass resulting from the liturgical revival of the twenties. So it stands as "a spatial denial of the liturgical ideals to which St. John's is dedicated." But it does have an outstanding feature, which will be regretted, and that is its warm-hearted sunrise facade in the primitive Roman tradition.

The new church, if the northerly direction is adopted, will instead be a

soulless building. In fact, it is hard to believe that Mr. Breuer did not force himself to accept this northern alignment only from a false sense of necessity. The beautiful large window he planned for the facade can not come to life and animation unless it is given a quarter turn to the East. From the Christmas sunrise, late, low and pale, to the glorious magnificence of mid-summer's early, north-easterly daybreak, the seasons would play every possible variation upon this Resurrection window. Even during the Paschal night, the rising full moon could take her place through it in the mysteries of the Easter vigil. As for the baptistry, its meaning as the font of rebirth would find heightened expression in the fresh wonder of dawn.

To remedy the false orientation implicit in the present plan, Mr. Breuer produced a remarkable scheme. He conceived a monumental structure to reflect moonday sunlight into the somber facade window. This has been given the rather barbarous name of "bell banner." Elegantly designed, like an outdoor movie screen cantilevered on four graceful concrete legs, it is a ninety-foot combination of triumphal arch or gateway, light reflector, sign post, cross bearer, and campanile. Even a Boy Scout knife does not claim so many functions.

Through the "bell banner's" five years of mental existence, it is interesting to notice its evolution and continued refinement. No polishing, however, can hope to straighten some of its false premises. One hardly needs to point out that there would be no necessity for light reflection were the church given its proper orientation, or that the cross — embedded in the thickness of a "window" cut into the screen — can be "legible" only from dead center and at a good distance, whence it may be almost too small to be seen. The photographs of the model already prove this. But perhaps the most distressing aspect of the "bell banner" is its intended use as a support for bells.

In asserting that church towers were built originally as bastions for defense and later adorned with bells, Mr. Stoddard makes an understandable confusion between a belfry and a campanile. The belfry or, as the French call it, *belfroi*, was indeed a strong fort with a high look-out. In time, it became the symbol of the independent city. The campanile, however, is originally an ecclesiastical building. It appeared upon the face of Europe only in the twelfth century, and for the simple function of lodging the large bells which bronze founders were just then learning to cast. And, incidentally, bell founding and ringing were priestly offices in those primitive days.

The Church's purpose for bells is double. She blesses and consecrates them to call the faithful (thus ordering the hours of time) and to dispel evil spirits (thus, as Guardini points out, conquering all space in God's name). The orderly sounds of true tones, rich with their overtones, are rung out to replace the chaos and confusion of noise, to conquer and consecrate the air. Now, the invisible air is the symbol of the spirit — God breathed the "breath of life" into Adam, and, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down "as the power of a great wind." So, to our ears, the living moving air is made "visible" by the resonance of a great bronze voice; to our eyes, by the undulating pulse of a flowing silken banner. No wonder that brave men are stirred by these ethereal symbols of the spirit. No won-

der, too, that Mr. Breuer sought to combine these in his projected monument. But a rigid banner and a low campanile are, alas, both contradictions in terms.

The function of bells demands that they be placed high — as high up as possible above other buildings. Their ring, vibrating as "shook foil" (Hopkins could only have meant gold leaf, with its brilliant and volatile quality), is then undistorted and can reach great distances, remaining clean and true. But the nature of bells also makes them heavy (I am talking of real bells, not of the small tubes or wires which are now offered to give, by way of electronic loud-speakers, an imitation of true bell sounds). In a bell support, the architect therefore must work for the greatest height compatible with the necessary thrust-bearing structure. It is a delicate proposition, a test of the refinement of the most sensitive builder. That bells in a northern climate should be protected from the weather, that they should be easily reached by a safe stairway for care and maintenance — all these practical considerations make their further demands upon the design of a functional bell support.

It is interesting, too, to remember that bells have long been related to the setting sun. The pre-Christian connection between bells and death is still living in our death knell. And the association of the departing soul with the setting sun is written deeply in the consciousness of the human race. A particular intensity of meaning is thus expressed by a bell structure built towards the West.

A year ago, St. John's monks had decided to put off for a time construction on their much-needed new church. So the air of finality which *Adventure in Architecture* gave to its published plans did not seem irrevocable. Unfortunately, however, in the last months the ground has been broken. When I say this is unfortunate, I am thinking in terms of universality and tradition. I can't help having also in mind those critical, as yet unborn grandchildren of ours, who will be college boys at St. John's in the twenty-first century, and who may perhaps rediscover and develop a traditional wisdom of East and West of which today's world is still unaware.

## Twilight Fox

• August Derleth

Come stepping delicately, so and so,  
precise upon the lane just past the trees' dark wall,  
unwitting that I see him go,  
the spirit of the woods walks forth, under pewee's call  
and veery's harp, gathering in the dusk,  
and pauses there to smell the evening's fragrant musk.  
He stands a lengthening moment slowly grown aware  
that something alien pervades the summer air,  
then suddenly, alert, turns to disappear among the grasses  
— and what was glimpsed of that wild mystery passes.

# No Balm in Gilead

● Robert A. Wiggins

“**C**ARRIE! You, Carrie! Don’t let that boy out of your sight!” The voice, although feeble, came shrilly to the kitchen.

“He ain’t out’n my sight!” Carrie answered.

“Bring him here and let me see. I told you not to let him wander out front. Bring him here, you hear?”

Carrie wiped her pink palms across her apron front and heaved her brown bulk up from the kitchen chair near the screen door leading out to the back yard. “Come here, Little Claude, so yo’ Granny can get a look at you.”

The boy, thin and solemn, came to the door and peered in through the wire screen at the cook standing darkly just inside.

“Yo’ Granny havin’ one of her days. Come in here where she can look at you.”

Carrie led the boy through the kitchen, down a narrow hallway to a room at the end. It was a gloomy cavern with the shades drawn so that the furnishings loomed large and indistinct. A high massive oak bed, ornately carved, dominated the room. Near the foot of the bed, seated in a chair with a quilt drawn across her lap, sat the boy’s grandmother.

“Come here, Little Claude, so I can see you.” Silently the boy drew near and stood before the old woman. “You ain’t to go around front where you can roam down to the highway like a common sharecropper brat, you hear?”

“Ain’t been no sharecroppers round here in years,” Carrie complained. “Gilead ain’t even a town no more since Columbus took to spreadin’ all outside the city limits. Ain’t a stalk of cotton growin’ a mile from here. Ain’t nothin’ but all them shacks for houses and them saloons all up and down Talboton Road.”

“To think I’d live to see the day when the old place was sold away acre by acre and my only son a common tavern keeper. Has Big Claude eat his dinner yet?”

“Yes’m. He say he won’t be up for supper. It’s Sat’day night. He’ll eat at the store.”

“It’s scandalous eating nothing but them hamburgers when he’s got a nice home and could have a good hot meal.”

“He say he got to keep a eye on the help down there. It’s gonna be busy tonight.”

“I don’t want to hear about it. I don’t want Little Claude to know nothing about that place.”

“Yes’m. Anything I can git before I go back to the kitchen?”

“Fetch me another bottle of my heart tonic. This one’s empty.”

“I have to make you some more. They ain’t none made up now.”

“Fetch the stuff here and make it up right here. You did something wrong the last time. It didn’t seem to have the right effect. I don’t think you put in enough asafetida.”

The Negro moved slowly out of the room. The old woman looked

back at her grandson still standing before her. "Sit down here where I can keep an eye on you. Honest to God I don't know what the world's coming to. There was a time when the name Dunford meant something in Gilead. I want you to remember that. You always remember you're a Dunford, and there was a time when the name Dunford meant something in Gilead. It was all them soldiers during the war. All them soldiers and their women, they changed everything. But don't forget you're a Dunford."

Carrie came back into the room complaining, "I don't see why you cain't let Mr. Claude bring you a bottle of whiskey from the store. I don't see why I got to get you this white corn ever time you run out. That stuff Mr. Claude sell down at the store is better."

"You can't see because you don't know no better. It was your own Mammy I learned the recipe for heart tonic from, and it has to be made with pure corn and asafetida." The old woman carefully measured out a portion of asafetida into a large medicine bottle. "Now pour in the corn up to that top line and shake the bottle twenty-five times."

Carrie placed her thumb over the mouth of the bottle and shook vigorously. "It sure do stink. Honest, I don't see how you can take that stuff. I never would let my Mammy put a asafetida bag round my neck in the winter time."

"Did you ever know a medicine that was good for you that tasted good? I reckon not. Now pour out six tablespoons in a glass with a little water." She sipped the fetid mixture slowly and grimaced. "It does taste awful, but it has to be took slowly for it to do any good."

"It smell like somethin' crawled

up somewhere and died."

"Don't talk like that in front of the boy. Even if he can't repeat it, I don't want him to hear talk like that. Lord knows he probably hears enough from his father. Him carrying on the way he does as if he had no respect for his wife in her grave."

"You sure has got a short memory, Miz Dunford. You know good and well what a fit you had when Mr. Claude got married. You wouldn't have nothin' to do with her till the baby came. Stayed in yo' room all the time."

"To think I should see my own son end up like this. Nothing but a common tavern keeper, profiting from the sins of others. It ain't Christian. It ain't right. His own grandfather managed tenants on three thousand acres for Major Turner, and his own father was a respected man in Gilead. We had our own farm till the depression wiped us out like everybody else."

"You wouldn't let Mr. Claude go to work in the mills in town. He done right well when you think about it. All the time that little old grocery store was what kept us eatin', and when the war come he fixed up the store for all the soldier trade. He bought and sold land around here. I tell you, Mr. Claude is right well thought of. Times is changed. Don't nobody in Gilead farm no more. Everybody got a filling station or a store or them tourist cabins. It just ain't like it used to be, and Mr. Claude, he doin' right well."

"It's scandalous, his traipsing around. I told him he better not bring any of them fancy women home for me to meet. I reckon he knows I meant it. What goes on down at that tavern I don't want to know. It's bad enough living on

money got from other people's sinning. I don't want to have my nose rubbed in it. I told him what he does outside this house is his own business, but inside this house he's got to be an example for his own child. None of them women hanging around a tavern is going to have any influence over Little Claude."

"He a good man, Miz Dunford. He do the best he know how. He cain't help it if he's a man. He work hard and don't git in no trouble."

"Little Claude, you go out and play. Stay in the back yard, and Carrie will bring you out some lemonade in a little while. Go on now!" She remained silent until she heard the screen door slam in the kitchen. "This woman he's running around with now, she's a grass widow —"

"No ma'am. She a real widow. Her husband was killed in the war."

"It doesn't matter. I told him I didn't want to discuss it. I wasn't interested, and he needn't think he can soft soap me into meeting her. I told him not to bring any of them women around here. Where did he meet her? I suppose she came into the tavern."

"No ma'am. She work in a office where Mr. Claude go to do business. That's how he meet her. She work in this office and live at home with her Ma and Pa. That's what Mr. Claude say."

"Oh, it's easy to pull the wool over his eyes. Has he ever met her folks? I'll bet not. You can just see what's happening. She's going to rope him in if he's not careful, and her been a married woman."

"Mr. Claude he been married befo' too. It ain't like he didn't know what he was doin'."

"I don't want to hear any more about it. It starts my heart to pal-

pitating. Get me some more water and leave that tablespoon here where I can reach it."

Carrie moved the table with a pitcher of water, the tablespoon, and medicine closer to the old woman. "Now you rest and be quiet. I gonna be in the kitchen fixin' me and Little Claude some supper. Is there anything I can fix you?"

"Maybe a glass of buttermilk with some cornbread crumbled in it. I might take a little nap before supper."

When she returned to the kitchen Carrie was surprised to see a figure seated at the table. "Mr. Claude," she exclaimed, "I thought you said you goin' to stay down at the store!"

He silenced her with his finger pressed to his lips. "Sh! Don't talk so loud. How is she?"

"She doin' right poor today. She say her heart palpitatatin', but I expect she be better later on when her medicine take hold."

"I reckon I better not talk to her just now. I might upset her. But I can't keep putting it off. She's got to know sooner or later. Only I don't want to shock her with her weak heart."

"She too mean to die, Mr. Claude. She just get upset, but she too mean to die."

"It doesn't seem right to say so. Even if it's true it doesn't seem right to say so."

"What you goin' tell her. You goin' to marry that woman? Is that what you goin' tell her?"

The man rose and went over to the screen door. He seemed older as the sunlight reflected from outside picked out the early gray hairs at his temples and the lines about his eyes and mouth. "The fact is we're married already," he said and then hastened to add, "but don't you let

on you know yet."

Carrie stood silent for a moment and then moved to his side. She timidly placed a brown hand on his shoulder. "What you aimin' to do, Mr. Claude? When you a baby I nurse you like my own. I cook for you and look after the house and your Ma and Little Claude. What you aimin' to do?"

"I don't exactly know yet. Mary says she won't move in here. We got to have a place to ourselves in town. I don't know how Mama will take that on top of everything else."

"Don't you worry none about that, Mr. Claude. Miz Dunford and Little Claude they used to me. We stay right here, and I look after them. You can come back from the store ever once in a while, and at night you can be down at the store watchin' the help or gallivantin' around. After a while we can tell Miz Dunford."

"Mary thinks after we get settled maybe we ought to have the boy with us, and then maybe send him to one of them schools. They have special schools for kids that can't talk."

"Miz Dunford for sure ain't goin' to like that. You leave the boy here a while till Miz Dunford git used to everything."

Claude looked down at the door and saw his son pressed against the screen, his palms shading his face from the outside glare as he peered in. "Come in here, boy, and see your daddy."

Claude took his son by the hand, led him over near the table, and sat down with the boy standing between his knees facing him. "You like your daddy, son?" The boy nodded his head up and down twice. "How would you like to have a mama?" Little Claude gazed solemnly at his

father and made no sign.

Claude turned to Carrie. "It's hard to know how much he knows and how much he understands. I'd give a pretty if he could be made to talk like other kids. It ain't right him growing up like this." He stood up. "I'll be going now. Don't tell Mama I was here. I'll be back some time tomorrow, and you let me know when you think I can tell her."

When he was gone Carrie shuffled about the kitchen preparing a meal for the boy. At the table she set before him a plate with a piece of ham cut up and some snapbeans warmed over from dinner and a cup of milk. "You eat that, Little Claude, and then I'll break open a biscuit and pour some syrup over it for you."

"Carrie! You, Carrie!" Mrs. Dunford's shrill old voice came down the hall. "You watching that boy? Don't you let him wander around in front so he can see what's going on down at that tavern."

"He fix'n' to go to bed," Carrie called back.

"Come get me some medicine. I've got this swimming feeling in my head."

Back in the bedroom Carrie measured out several spoonfuls of the fetid mixture into an equal amount of water and handed it to the old woman. "You better take yo' butter-milk and cornbread first."

"Not right now. Hand me my Bible and let me read some of the Word." She propped herself up in the chair and laid the Bible on her lap until she finished sipping the medicine. Her old eyes glittered feverishly. She handed the empty glass back to Carrie. "There. Now find my reading glass and then go keep your eye on Little Claude. I don't want him wandering out of the

house around front."

"Yes'm." Carrie went back to her kitchen. Little Claude had finished his meal and waited patiently while Carrie broke open a large biscuit and dribbled corn syrup over it on his plate. "When you finish eatin', you go change into yo' night gown."

Carrie moved about the kitchen in the gathering dusk, reluctant to turn on a light yet, but finally as the lightning bugs began signalling in the back yard she switched on the overhead light. Little Claude was licking his sticky hands. Carrie wiped them with a damp cloth and said, "Go on now. Change into yo' nightgown."

She then poured buttermilk over crumbled cornbread in a glass and stirred the thick mixture with a spoon. She carried the skimpy meal back to the old woman and entered the room talking. "The sun's gone down now. Let me light the lamp so you can see to eat yo' buttermilk and cornbread."

In the dim light Carrie saw the old figure slumped in her chair breathing soft, bubbly snores. "Miz Dunford, you better eat a little something." The old woman stirred, and Carrie called again, "You got to keep up yo' strength."

Mrs. Dunford blinked against the light. "Where's the boy?"

"He in the kitchen. Come on now and eat a little of this nice, fresh buttermilk and bread."

"Bring Little Claude here where I can look at him. I just know you haven't been keeping your eye on him."

Carrie sighed and turned back toward the kitchen. The old woman stirred the spoon in the glass of milk and bread. She gingerly sipped from the spoon. "That fool woman forgot to salt it," she muttered. She tried

a spoonful of the mixture. "It ain't fit to eat." She raised her voice, "What's keeping you? Bring that boy here and take this slop away!"

"He ain't in his room, and he ain't in the kitchen," Carrie called back.

"I knew it. I knew you couldn't do a simple thing like keeping your eye on that boy."

"I'm looking, Miz Dunford. He cain't go far. He was here just a minute ago."

"I just know he's done gone outside and wandered off around front. You get him in here fast!" the old woman screamed.

After a few minutes Carrie returned. "He ain't outside. I called him; he'll be coming in a minute. He cain't answer back, but he'll come. He around here somewhere."

The old woman stood up scolding, "I'll look for him myself. If you want something done, you got to do it yourself. I know where he's got to. I'll get him. I just hope it's not too late."

"Now Miz Dunford, you cain't go out wandering around. He be in here in a minute."

"Don't stand there telling me what I can't do." Her voice no longer was an aged quaver. "I'm going down there to get that boy." She brushed Carrie aside and stormed down the hall. Though the front door was nearby, it was never used, and automatically she headed for the kitchen and the back door. Outside she paused in the back yard peering into the dark around her. She muttered, "I just know he's wandered around front and down to that den of sin."

As she rounded the front of the house she could see the beginning of a path leading down the gently inclining hill toward the highway a couple of hundred yards away. Here

in front the yard was dark. Behind her the small house presented a gloomy facade, with the shutters and blinds closed on all the windows. Down in front of her the highway was a stream with banks of neon lights. She headed down the path leading toward the rear of the nearest cluster of lights. She moved slowly and stumbled often, once falling to her knees and remaining in that posture for a time until the giddiness subsided.

She picked her way around several cars parked about the tavern. For the first time she saw the front of the building. A neon sign over the doorway announced The Oasis Bar and Grill. Where once there had been a small, shabby grocery store with its sagging front porch and cluttered front windows, now there was a cement sidewalk and a store front of glass brick, stucco, and neon. The old woman was dazzled and hesitated uncertainly before entering the door.

Inside she found herself standing in a foyer surrounded by music coming from no particular direction. Soft, muted strings played mechanically, but she could not identify the source. She gazed about her in wonder. What she had expected she could not have said, but certainly she had not been prepared for what to her seemed a luxurious decor of mirrors, chrome, thick carpets, glass, and soft lights. To her right she could see into the dimly lighted bar, where there was a fireplace right out in the middle of the floor with wood burning in it. And to her left was the dining room with white table cloths and silverware gleaming.

The old woman turned and fled from the place. Blinely she stumbled back up the path. Nearing the kitchen, she could again hear music,

but instead of violins softly muted it was the hollow, tinny record of a foxtrot from the 1920's. In the kitchen Little Claude sat in mute wonder before an old portable Victrola on the table, a pile of records beside him. Carrie met her at the door. "Where you been, Miz Dunford? You shouldn't be wandering around in the dark. I told you not to worry about Little Claude. He was in the parlor. That's where I found him."

The old woman made no sound. She held on to the doorframe and peered about the shabby kitchen as though taking comfort from the familiar surroundings. "I'll help you to yo' room," said Carrie.

Once settled again in the chair in her room, the old woman, breathing heavily, said, "Pour me some of my medicine. This bottle is nearly empty. You better mix up another one." Carrie moved about doing her bidding. The old woman made a wry face as she drank the mixture. "Carrie, I was down there. The minute I got there I knew Little Claude hadn't gone down there."

"I told you, Miz Dunford, he wouldn't do that."

"I just had to go down there, and, Carrie, it ain't at all what I thought it was like."

"I been trying to tell you that all this time. You just had yo' mind made up, and nothing was gonna budge it."

"I haven't changed the way I think. It's just it didn't look at all like what I expected. The devil seduces with honeyed words and the sound of sweet music."

Carrie looked puzzled at her last words. "If you don't need me, I'll go see if Little Claude has changed into his nightgown."

"Where was he?"

"I heard a noise in the parlor. He don't hardly ever go in the parlor, but he was in there and found them old Victrola records he was playing with, so I got out the old Victrola and showed him how to play it."

In the kitchen Carrie found the boy still sitting before the phonograph. A record revolved on the turntable making scratchy, tinny noises, but over this obstacle soared the clear voice of Caruso. The boy sat entrapt, his eyes closed.

"You got to wash yo' feet," Carrie said. She placed a basin on the floor and poured warm water in it from a kettle. The boy set the same record to playing from the beginning and then came and stood in the basin. Carrie placed a chair behind him so he could sit and continue washing his feet. In a few minutes she inquired, "Yo' feet clean yet?" She lifted the boy up, sat down with him on her lap, and dried his feet on a towel. Carrie worked slowly, and when she had finished she stood the boy up while she emptied the basin into the sink. Reseating herself, she took him once again upon her lap and held him snuggled to her bosom. Silent tears welled in the boy's eyes, and Carrie soothed him. "Hush now. Don' you cry." The record ended with a long clear note of

Caruso's voice. The boy pointed to the phonograph, and Carrie reached over to turn the crank a few times and start the record again.

The boy's tears dried, and he slipped an arm half around Carrie's waist as he settled down on her lap. "Now, now," she soothed him, "go to sleep." The record played on while Carrie rocked the boy back and forth. When it ended she let the record continue turning with a scratching sound rather than disturb the boy in his first sleep.

Above the whispered sound of the record she could now hear the voice of the old woman bibulously raised softly humming and singing a hymn in her high pitched voice. Carrie did not have to look in order to know that the old woman would be rocking back and forth in her chair, stopping occasionally to sip a little of her medicine straight from the bottle.

The record scratched slowly now as the spring driving the turntable gradually unwound. Carrie rose up with the boy in her arms to take him to his bed. She spoke quietly to the sleeping child, "I think tomorrow I tell yo' Daddy to go on ahead and tell her. I think that be the best."

## Evanescence

● Genevieve K. Stephens

In a wet wind  
A cold  
Spring  
The broken pattern  
Of Spirea  
Could not  
Be mended.

# A Caveat Against Realism

● Brother Fortinian Joseph, F.S.C.

T SEEKS to me that *realism* is a peculiarly unfortunate term to apply to any category of literature, but particularly drama. The word *realism* promises extremely much to the peruser or hearer of the literary work; *realism* says implicitly that in this work, reader, you will find a faithful reproduction of what you see outside this work; that here in these words you will find what life, love, society, morals, danger, evil, good and all other realities give to you in a framework of agent and action and passion in which words are merely an entitative part, and perhaps an exceedingly minor part. I realize, of course, that literary history has given the designation of realism to a movement of the nineteenth century which attempted various modifications of the slice-of-life technique, and I am willing to accept the little fiction inherently present in the assumption that people like Ibsen, Pinero, and Jones wrote realistic drama, as long as both he who speaks to me and I who listen are both aware that we are using a rhetorical "gimmick" in our discussion.

What happens, though, when either he or I seriously believe that a play that we are discussing, any play whatsoever, is really *real*, that it presents reality of actual life undiluted and immediate? Unfortunately, much dramatic criticism rests on that belief, even though most critics who use it as their basis of judgment rarely advert to it explicitly — a tendency which makes its use particularly dangerous. How many times has the reader of this article perused critical essays which assert something like: "Between his last appearance on stage in Act I and his first appearance in Act II, Hamlet has thought so intensely about the visit of his father's ghost that he (Hamlet) really has become deranged." If I accept that assertion or even if, on its own terms, I deny it, I have fallen, I think, into a monstrous trap. I have allowed the writer to delude me into accepting, perhaps without his or my being aware of it, a transmutation of a *dramatis persona* into a *vitae persona*. And the consequences which can flow from such a transmutation are deadly in the speed and accuracy with which they can destroy valid dramatic criticism.

Valid dramatic criticism rests, I think, on a valid concept of what drama is. But what is drama? As I use the term now, I think I am safe in aligning it among the various art forms; it is something made and what therefore is art. According to St. Thomas, the virtue of art resides in the intellect, is directed towards the making of an object, and is manifested in the right order of the composition of the object. In other words, the artist is one who makes an object which in its final entity is distinct from himself but which arises from him in its stages of efficient and formal causality. Thus, a drama is present in its inception in the mind of the author, but the drama will not be complete drama before it will have been composed and,

if we wish to be purist, presented on a stage before an audience. Its excellence as art, from the restricted point of view we have adopted, will reside in its being a well-made object entirely informed by the particular creative urge first present in the psyche of the dramatist.

But the essence of drama as art does not reside only in the artist and in the object he makes. One can also consider the exemplary cause of the object; and, at least in the drama as we of the West have practiced it, one *must* consider the exemplary cause, simply because so much of Western drama has descended from the practice of the Greeks, a practice codified in the *Poetics* of Aristotle. The importance of the exemplary cause in Aristotle's examination of the drama may be seen in his definition of Tragedy, a genre of Drama: "Tragedy . . . is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude . . . ." What Aristotle means by action is important. He does not mean it simply to be any actualizing of any potentiality or any simple series of such actualizings — unless such a series bears within its members a coherent relationship of significance whereby the first actualization has a causal relationship to the second, and the second to the third, and so on. In the whole concatenation of actualizings there must exist a single meaning tying all the disparate acts into one entity. Aristotle insists that the unity that inheres in the drama must inhere in the significant linking of events so closely that to displace one of the events would be to wreck the single unity, or action, which all the acts are joining to comprise. To search for the unity any place but in the structure of linked events is to invite disaster in the realm of drama; thus, to have many acts about a mythic hero find their unity only in the fact that they are about that hero is not for Aristotle true drama. They would become true drama only if the artist were to take from among the various acts that could be portrayed those that follow one clear line of meaning (e.g., the meaning implicit in Oedipus's stubborn determination to find the cause of the plague ravishing his city) with a consequent rejection of all that would not be relevant to that meaning, and then to fashion the whole into a single *action*. Thus, action for Aristotle has a decidedly technical signification.

But Aristotle says that the action is to be imitated. The word *imitation* has had a long history of interpretations into which I have neither the time nor the adequacy to enter. The interpretation I posit here is one which, I think, stands reasonably close to Aristotle's meaning when he used the word. It seems to me that "imitation" yields its meaning when we approach it from the basis already established in the previous paragraph. When Aristotle says that tragedy is an imitation of an action, we must, to understand him, accept his peculiar version of "action." And, as we have seen, action is most definitely not an undifferentiated hodge-podge of any events at all. It is a carefully selected pattern of events, each one of which has its own particular role in the entire ensemble, a role as necessary as cause is to effect or as effect to cause. But where does that pattern exist first? Certainly not in history, should the play be about an historical personage or event. All one need do to perceive the truth of that statement is to imagine the tremendous number of small things that a Henry V might do during the course of a year and then read Shakespeare's *Henry V* to see

how among all these events, actual and imagined, Shakespeare chose only those that would help in the final portrayal of the "Mirror of Christian Princes." The pattern can exist only in the imaginative faculty of the artist. He is the one who sees a significance in the real or fancied events and attempts to present to us the significance he sees.

So then imitation on one level is the reproduction of that which has happened or that could happen; and on another level it is these things passed through the mind of the author so that he can, in Aristotelian terms, arrive at the "essence" of them in a first creative move; and then, in a second creative move, determine which events are most significant and which are least; and finally, in a third creative move, select all that is necessary to present the chosen events in such a way as to insure their significance's being made obvious to the perceiver. In short, I am insisting here that imitation for Aristotle must have meant not only a mere representation of some external object but, much more importantly, the whole philosophical process of abstraction and then of creative synthesis spoken of above. It is, in terms used by Ralph Waldo Emerson, nature passed through the alembic of a man; the artist's manipulation of the raw material of reality is basic in the concept of imitation.

One other element in the essence of drama must be discussed before I can formulate my criticism of the word *realism*. If drama is an imitation of an action, actors are assumed to be doing the acting. But actors are also assumed to be doing the acting in the action imitated in, say, a fable. A great difference exists, however, between the two imitations. The fable employs a basic voice which reports in a dynamic mode the actions and the voices of the agents, so that the hearer of the fable does not actually hear the voices of the actors coming from their own throats but only through the throat of the basic voice; in plain terms, in the fable and all forms like it the actors reach the hearers only through the mediation of a voice not their own (unless, obviously, one of those voices is the basic voice; that is, unless the story is told in the first person). In drama that mediate voice is suppressed; we do not hear that the actors have said such and such a thing; rather we actually hear them saying it. The difference is a profound one. The mediacy that the narrator creates between his characters and his audience in the narrative form gives way to the immediacy of the dramatic form. Whereas, before, the whole story found its expression through the words of the narrator, now the story finds its expression through the words given by the dramatist to his characters, who then deliver them with appropriate inflections, facial and bodily movements, maneuverings onstage, and everything else that constitutes dramatic form in its ultimate reality. But, nevertheless, even drama is still imitation; an author has given his words to his characters; what life they have has been given to them by him. That qualification must always be remembered if one is to analyze drama accurately.

In short then, the drama, in its produced form (when, as one of my professors once remarked, the drama has become a play), allows an action to develop through the instrumentality of its actors actually there present before the watcher/hearer. Consequently its mode of imitation is going to move much closer to the thing imitated than will that kind of art that

expresses human activity through media farther removed from human life than the living persons speaking the words and performing the actions in a play. In a play living persons are imitating living persons; in narrative, words and only words are imitating living persons. Drama thus would seem to be in a favored position in the realm of contact with a hearer, and indeed it is. But with its privilege comes also a concomitant danger, the danger which was mentioned at the head of this article: the play can be considered so immediate to the watcher that the watcher can judge it as if it were life.

It is precisely here that the term *realism* raises its hydra head. Imagine a critic either watching or reading a play (and the second activity should not be the only one if the critic expects to render a reasoned judgment); he sees men and women passionately acting and suffering their way through a series of events that seem remarkably similar to events in his own life or in the lives of some men and women on this earth somewhere, sometime. The critic comes away from the play convinced that the play represents reality, that real people have been paraded before him, that a real problem has been discussed, and that, sometimes anyway, a real answer applicable to similar human situations has been advanced. If the critic does think this way and proceeds to praise the drama because of its reality or, as happens too often, blames it because of a lack of reality, he has, it seems to me, fallen into the monstrous trap I mentioned earlier. He has ignored the very essence of the drama and has assigned to it an entity it neither can have nor, I think, should have.

Ontologically a drama is a manifestation of an exercise of the virtue of art in the intellect. Therefore, what is in front of the critic is essentially a lucubration; and the critic in his judgments should always remember that what he is judging is a creation proceeding from the author's imaginative faculty and that therefore he, the critic, is at least two removes away from reality. The critic ought not to collapse the role of the author so that it disappears; he ought not to allow the seeming reality before him to convert itself for him into actual reality. He, above all others, ought to realize precisely what the nature of the drama is; its nature is not the nature of the exemplary cause behind the drama. The two are quite different.

Ontologically, too, a drama, in its manifestation aspect, is an arrangement with a beginning, middle, and end. That is, it has, or should have, order and composition. Of necessity, that order and composition must be of a quality different from those found in the reality being imitated, precisely because the imitated reality has been abstracted from and its essence has been found and re-presented in selected episodes and selected words whose one duty is to present the significance powerfully and unhamperedly. That which is not to the point is avoided. Therefore, again, the nature that flows from this arrangement is not the nature that the reality being imitated has. The two are quite different.

But if the natures are so different, what can be said of the critic who confuses them? Paradoxically enough, I would tend to excuse the poor man, because he has made a most understandable mistake. He has confused *seeming reality* with reality itself. The word *seeming* must, therefore, be extraordinarily important. Its signification is obvious. *Seeming* some-

thing is not *being* something. The play *Hamlet*, for example, seems to carry a young prince through the tortures of a nightmarish several months; but — and as obvious as the statement is, it still has to be made — no prince has gone through any tortures at all; he has only seemed to experience them. But does the seeming have an ontology of its own? Surely it does. Its ontology is all that is called drama, and despite its being capable sometimes of telling us more about reality than reality itself can tell us about itself, any solid criticism of dramatic ontology should be based on thoroughly dramatic principles. The confusion begins to arise when a viewer mixes ontology of drama with ontology of reality being imitated and arrives at conclusions whose premises are not in the play but outside it in the imitated reality.

Take, for example, the interpretations of Hamlet in Freudian terms. Some critics assume Hamlet can be psychoanalyzed and proceed blithely to analysis, ignoring, unfortunately, basic premises of Freudian psychoanalytic method. The method depends heavily upon the patient's free-association telling of anything that has ever happened to him. Without the self-revelation of forgotten pasts, no interpretation can result. But suppose that the patient who enters the psychoanalyst's office were at the moment before just created; were, in a sense, a sort of Melchisedech with no progenitors, no beginning, no prehistory, no subconscious to be probed. The result is clear. The area proper to a psychoanalyst's interpretation would be nonexistent, and hence no report could be made. But a *dramatis persona* is precisely of this type. He has had no childhood, no parental conflicts, no anything except what is present between the first line and the last line of the play; and what is present there is highly selected and ordered — and from that type of selection one cannot arrive at a valid psychoanalytic statement, simply because one is working with a being who only "seems" to be a man. How tragic a blunder to treat him as if he were a man in any area other than those actually given him by his creator!

And the same reasoning applies to the less spectacular psychological approaches to dramatic characters. Even the slightest reading into the play of the assumption that Hamlet is anything but an artificial being — an artifact — can vitiate the criticism that proceeds from that assumption. And how far the assumption can go is evident in books like *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* or the learned articles whose fabric is determined by the assigning to the play's people thoughts, reactions, emotions, passions, and so on, unexpressed in the play's text, but proper, possibly, to the people upon whom the play's action is based. Private interpretation of this type can lead, I fear, to some extraordinarily chaotic nonsense.

But how does one explain the paradox (this subject is full of paradoxes) that Hamlet and other superbly drawn stage people seem more like men than the people we meet on the street? I think that that phenomenon is explainable in terms of the creative power of the dramatist. He imitates; he abstracts. Seeing clearly the foibles, the characteristics, the peculiarities of men about him, he can so heighten these items in his stage characters that at long last we who have seen the peculiarities so often in our acquaintances without recognizing them are now hit by a sudden shock of recognition, and we say: "For heaven's sake, John acts just like that!"

Perhaps he does; but I would be inclined to say that John doesn't act *quite* like that; he acts just a shade less decisively, just a bit less recognizably; what he does has more extraneous matter surrounding it. In other words he is not the living characteristic that his counterpart upon the stage is. And even if he is, he still does many other things that inevitably detract from his powerful dominating characteristic in a way that the unhampered, uncluttered stage character is not subject to. Therefore, strangely enough, the great seeming reality we see and value in the characters on stage is, I think, in almost direct reverse ratio to the reality being imitated. The more real the stage presentation, the more successful the dramatist has been in isolating and abstracting from the beings in whom the characteristic inheres the characteristic he wants, and in presenting that characteristic uncluttered with the many nonessential items that all living flesh is heir to.

Hence, I argue with the use of the word *realism* in dramatic criticism. Its use is based, I fear, on a series of misinterpretations of the nature of drama and of the audience's response to drama. *Realism* promises what it cannot give. It cannot give us the world as we know it. And yet it seems to say that it will. If it does not want to give us external reality in its entirety, the word ought to be changed for another that will indicate precisely what state of abstraction from reality we are working with. If the word or those words are not forthcoming, then at least when we use *realism* we ought to be aware of the fiction we are manufacturing among ourselves and not delude ourselves into conclusions whose premises rest in areas that are not drama but that which drama is imitating.

## The Kindred Spirits

● Raymond Roseliep

He wrote a sonnet in the idiom  
his poet teacher liked, and with a splitting  
of some riming words, all of them slant.  
He won a prize, which brought the odium  
of other junior bards upon his head;  
he didn't worry much as long as he  
could imitate or please the teaching god  
who put Parnassus on a holiday.  
He chose his topic as a miner picks  
a vein: his little sister in a swing  
that dizzied their September air and paled  
their orchard gold. Inside, he felt those facts,  
but understated them before the man  
who was a bachelor and only child.

# The Star Maker

• E. J. Neely

THEODORE FAIRMAN patted his greatcoat pocket, reassuring himself that the telegram was still there, and the crisp envelope crackled under his touch. Almost-round divots of hard-packed snow fell back into his footprints from his galoshes as he plodded through the unshoveled new snow to the Playhouse gate. His gloved hand gently touched the small metal placard which hung beneath the latch, and he stood momentarily in the wind and the light, last flutter of the snowfall, seeing again the placard the day the gate became the front entrance to the Playhouse instead of the rear gate of the Huntingdon Estates. He could no longer read the words, but he remembered the inscription, "This carriage house and the grounds enclosed by the fence are donated to the Fairman Players by the Huntingdon Estates."

The day of the presentation had been the greatest day that far along in his life. He was not yet twenty and had formed an acting group so well accepted by the townspeople that they found the theater for him. Later, when his eyesight caused his rejection by all branches of the services, he took his group all over America and also abroad to entertain troops. In recent years the Playhouse had become more than a theater; it had become a drama school.

And now the second day of great importance had come. Tonight was the dress rehearsal of his own play *Hyacinth*, and the telegram in his

pocket assured him an agent from New York would sit in the audience. If his play received the attention he hoped it would, this could be his last production at the Playhouse. He would go to New York. But he couldn't go alone; he intended to ask Allison to marry him. Allison had become his eyes. Long before he admitted his increasing disability to himself, she had recognized and accepted it. She read to him, wrote his letters, kept the Playhouse accounts, and, once weekly, dug him out, as she called it, by whipping brightly through his small garret apartment with a sweeper borrowed from his landlady. She carried his laundry and cleaning about, bought all his groceries, and cooked many of his meals. In return, he adored her and gave her the dream of her life: he made her an actress.

Closing the gate, he squinted at the Playhouse. It had been built almost a century before, a long, narrow structure of wide planks met halfway by creosote-stained shingles that were bleached by the years to a deadleaf brown, and which had warped separately giving the upper half of the building a bulged appearance. The roof, three-gabled and gently sloping, lay sturdy under seven or more inches of accumulated snow. Under the eaves, an enclosed stairway, which the players used on show nights, clung to the wall like the sleeve of a coat, and the door at the bottom flapped in the wind. As he passed, he pushed it shut and

entered by the front door. In the foyer he stomped snow from his galoshes before crossing to a closet to remove a broom and snow shovel.

He supposed he had never enjoyed snow as he did this evening. He usually didn't do it (it was one of the tasks of the prop boys), and he wasn't doing a good job, but he didn't notice that. He just thought the building had never had a more beautiful setting and wished he could afford an orchid spotlight, the color some printer had whimsically chosen to cover the printed copies of *Hyacinth*.

Finished, he shook snow from his hat and hung it on the hook where everyone looked first before climbing upstairs; if his hat wasn't on the hook, he wasn't there. He chose a card from the stack and carried it outside and slid it into the metal bracket under the carriage light, stood back, assuring himself he'd chosen the right one: "Dress rehearsal tonight — visitors welcome."

Still wrapped in his greatcoat, he held his glasses toward the foyer light and wiped the moisture from them with the fringe of his plaid muffler, listening, while snow slid from the roof and landed with a dull bump somewhere outside. Then he sat for a short while, testingly, in the seat he would occupy tonight as the playwright, and looked toward the stage, straining every eye muscle, imprinting the whole of it into his memory.

The last faint rays of a winter sun filtered through the pane of a diamond-shaped window; thin fingers of light reached over cobwebs stretched across the glass and touched the high backs of the seats that filled the room in front of him. The light swung out over the stage, leaving it in shadowed darkness,

broken only on the prompt side, where a door stood open displaying a mirror which caught the light and threw it upon the worn stairs.

Finally, pulling his heavy body from the seat, he trudged on down the aisle to the steps and onto the stage, across it through the prompt door, where he pulled the handles of the switchbox. He noted one globe in the footlights was out and that the houselights and spots were working properly. He stood for a moment examining the stage, which was set for Act 1, pushed a horse-hair loveseat closer to the mantle, lighted the two glass lamps on the mantle and turned one wick lower, restacked the wedding gifts on the marble top table, changed the foot-light globe, oiled the hinges on the prompt door, took a last look around before he pushed back the switches, leaving only a small red bulb glowing at the foot of the stairs.

At the top of the stairs the door used by the players on show nights was closed against the cold and locked by a rusty slide fastener, probably by Allison, who had a dread that he would one day fall down those steep stairs. He pulled open the lock, picked up a purple dress which had been tossed over a prop chair, and hung it inside the girls' dressing room. A small field mouse, disturbed by the sound of his footsteps, darted into the open doorway of the prop room, where unpainted rafters met a broad beam in the center of the ceiling. Three small windows let the final dim rays of the sun play briefly over a dusty jumble of lamps and vases, chairs, doors and ladders, pillows, paint cans and a white trellis, climbed over with artificial vines and flowers. Then the dust and the dusk dissolved the light, and he groped his

way into the library, where he pulled the string, lighting the bare globe centered above the circle of chairs. So strongly had he tried to imprint the trellis with Allison beside it in *Spring Rain* upon his memory, it kept reappearing in front of his eyes as he stuffed newspapers and coal into the pot-bellied stove. He opened the damper, and by the time he dropped into his chair the fire had begun to crackle.

He reread the telegram, impatient for Allison to come; he wanted to tell her about it before the others got there. She worked in a department store; he was never entirely sure what she did there. He kept listening for the door, trying to calm his excitement. Tonight was only a dress rehearsal, he kept reminding himself, yet it was a first night, one of hundreds stretching back over his years of directing. Each had been important to him, each having its own special thrill, each a part of himself, yet other times that part was reflected in the young men and women of his drama classes; their laughter, their tears, voices, steps, movements were all a part of his energy; but tonight was his own, his own play, as well as his players.

The telegram was a limp wad as he jammed it into his pocket when the players' door slammed — Allison never slammed the door. It was Julius, who crossed the room to the stove, banging shut the damper, and who pointed to Theodore's greatcoat. "If Allison had found you here with that stove blazing away and your heavy coat on, your rehearsal would have been off to a fine start. And just to tell you something she would tell you, you're going to burn down your precious Playhouse some day, if you don't watch that damper."

"After this show, perhaps we can

heat the whole building with gas," Theodore told him, taking his place at the dressing room door. It was his custom to collect the cast's books on dress rehearsal nights. Allison finally came, after both dressing rooms were full. Excitement sparkled in her eyes; he had noticed her eyes, not when she joined his drama class, but on dress rehearsal night of *Romeo and Juliet*, during which she was prompter. She sat on the stool near the prompt door, with one hand holding the book and the other extended toward him holding the time watch. She called two-minutes, then said something to him about being glad to be taking a part in the show. Even in the backstage shadows, her eyes had a moist, luminous quality. He literally snatched her from the prompt stool on closing night and cast her in *Spring Rain*, and at the end of the rehearsals she was already showing great promise as an actress. He had no recollection of all the shows, but they had worked together for five years.

She kissed him as she handed him her book. "That's for luck, darling." He wanted to tell her about the telegram, but Julius was trying to adjust a mustache and Allison took the gum-arabic from his hand and fixed it for him. After that, there were sideburns for the younger boys and then the girls' make-up. He stacked the books and slipped out into the hall. From the top of the stairs he could hear the smooch of soft rubber-soled boots over the bare house floor. A muted voice below called "half-hour," then, "Mr. Fairman's meeting, fifteen minutes," and a boy seated on the chair at the players' door picked up the call. He looked at the boy. It was strange: he worked with these kids night in and night out and sometimes it seemed

he knew them better than he knew himself, yet on show nights they were no longer Tim Smith or Ann Brown, drama students; they were the time-keeper, the prompter, prop boys, the maid, the wedding guests, or the bride. He poked his head inside the red curtain of the girls' dressing room. Allison was tilting the maid's cap. She looked almost old enough to be the mother of the two daughters he had created for her in *Hyacinth*. She came to him quickly, handing him the burnt cork, and as he lined her face he felt a fine sprinkling of moisture on her forehead and the skin under her greasepaint felt unnaturally warm (the dressing room temperature rarely rose above fifty degrees). Her voice carried the pitch of her excitement. "I've been listening to them come in," she told him; "there must be a full-house already." After that, he had the bride's train to roll over the small pillow for her descent to the stage, so that the minutes passed and time came for his meeting. The call came up the stairs and was reechoed by the boy near the door.

Downstairs in the house, soft music played; upstairs in the library the cast gathered for the meeting. These few minutes set aside for a meeting were a part of his planning to have the shows start smoothly; he wanted the cast to have rested a few minutes before going on stage but he never said anything about tenseness or relaxing; that had all been said before. Now he told them a story about a long-ago first night shortly after the Playhouse had been converted from a carriage house. A harness had been overlooked backstage and a fat boy playing a postman had picked it up in the darkness, thrown the straps over his shoulders, and gone on stage. At

the five-minute call, the cast tramped softly down the stairs. The prompter looked at the swift hand of the time watch. "Two-minutes," she called softly, "first act on stage. House-lights dim."

A tall boy whose hand already rested on the switch lowered it half-way. The players due on stage slipped past, the prompter checked them off as they passed. "Houselights out," she leaned forward and lifted the needle from the record spinning near her. "Curtain," she whispered simultaneously. The murmur that rose gently as the music stopped, ended with the sound of the wooden rings on the round curtain rod.

On stage the bride's sister sat bleakly on the love seat near the mantle. Julius, the bride's father, stood near the prompt door with his back to the house whistling the wedding march. Allison, the bride's mother, fingered the wedding gifts. "Stop that, Edward, it's bad luck to whistle at a wedding." She said it sternly, her voice clear and good. The prompt door opened on cue. The bride stepped on stage, lifting her train over the sill of the door frame. She stood in the doorway a moment, her face tense, then ran to Allison. "Mother, something must have happened to him."

Theodore withdrew from his peephole, pulled his greatcoat around his arms, tiptoed up the stairs and out the players' door, down the outside stairway and entered the house by the main entrance.

He sat unmoved as his play unfolded before him. At times he thought how well someone handled a line, or how smoothly the prop boys switched the scene from Act 1 to Act 2 and back to be the same scene in Act 3. He felt pride that no one missed a cue. At no special

time in the running did he feel regret at casting Allison in the lead; he knew he could have cast her in the fleet bright spot as the bride. He knew now he had written the play for her, that her part was the play, and somehow he knew that Allison and not his story would get through to the agent who sat somewhere in the audience. He slipped outside as the curtain fell and walked through snow on the dark side of the building until the theater emptied; ordinarily he stood at the door, shaking hands, listening to passing comments.

When he went inside and walked down the aisle, he saw a dark felt hat in the middle of the wedding gifts. The agent and Allison, surrounded by the delighted, wondering cast (all his kids again, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, listening) stood talking in the middle of the stage. Allison ran to him; the man followed, arm outstretched. He couldn't wait, he told him; he had to rush up there to tell her how wonderful she was, to offer her a contract. He kept smiling at them, nodding. He told the rest of the cast they were great, dismissed them, told them he wanted to talk to the agent to make sure Allison got a good contract. Allison couldn't get over his sending for the agent without telling her.

And so that night, as on all dress rehearsal nights, he and the cast, and the agent, had dinner at Tony's. The show ran three nights, as did all Playhouse shows, good or bad, house full or half, and on the last night Allison's two new suitcases stood beside the players' door and everyone who came in bumped into them. And Theodore, at the bottom

of the steps, heard her pick up her last cue. "After all, Edward, darling, we still have another daughter to marry off."

He and Allison had talked in snatches over the past few days; she had called twice from the store. Was she doing the right thing? Would he be all right? He reassured her. "I'll come back every chance I get, Ted. And you come to New York. Oh, Ted, why won't you go with me? I'll need you." But she wouldn't need him.

The prompter said, "Curtain." He watched as she placed the needle on the record and pushed the switch. He heard, simultaneously as the music started, the rasp of the wooden rings on the wooden pole, the burst of applause. He looked closely at the prompter; tears obscured her face from his eyes, but he could see that she was a delicate girl with rather blonde hair. She had a warm friendliness.

"It was a wonderful play, Mr. Fairman, wonderful."

Her voice was delightful, he thought, a little too high, perhaps. He placed his hand on her arm.

"Come up to the library, my dear," (he wasn't sure of her name). "You have a good sense of timing and a good voice; let's see if we can find a part for you. We're casting *Spring Rain* tonight." He always cast the next show on closing night; in that way the group didn't feel let down. He didn't see Allison and the agent rush past him and up the stairs. He did note that the prop boy in charge of Mrs. Atherbury's antique lamps was packing them properly in the excelsior-lined boxes.

## Good Friday

● Dolores Kendrick

White-shored the island sits bird-palmed  
in the green oasis of the sun,  
the shore-bound sea-bound sands  
twinkle white and thread the earthen air  
to the watery sounds of liquid ghosts  
while the free-flow ghosts scramble like dust  
for a heaven.

Down in the sea-deep island  
I lie, the naked stranger calling  
for God . . . a thousand gods watch me,  
but none can answer; my voice drips  
in the pale sound of a star  
dropping in the slipping air  
and the gods wrap me in their shrouds

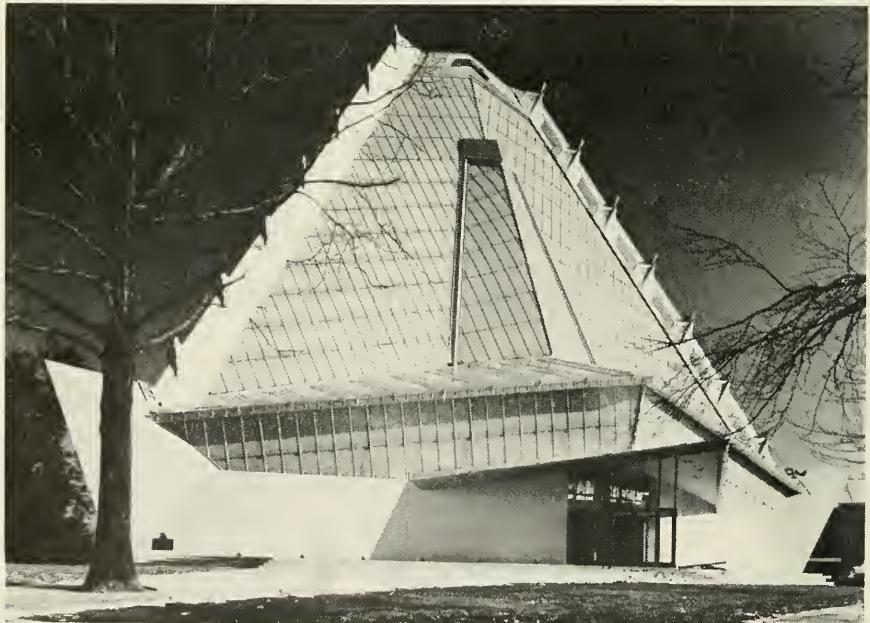
and press me to their hollow breasts.  
I shiver. The gods are cold.  
My mouth aches for the unsung word  
the deathless cry . . . I thirst.  
Above me melts day and night  
one both, fierce, gentle  
striking the searching gulls who never stop,

cradling the wisp-loined wind in the lap of my  
outstretched hand; time reaches  
for the gull's wing and gives him  
instead a little tender wave-washed  
hour then spurs him to the rock-blue  
coast. Unpeopled seconds find me  
lonely, but I am beyond their coming.

They are about me now these gods  
waiting for my life;  
the island oceaned presses the hope  
of heaven to my burning body  
and the city-sea blesses my flesh  
in chorused benediction  
and I live love and cry no more. Though  
my mind is still with the living black  
I sleep in the arms of angels.



U. S. PAVILION      Edward D. Stone



BETH SHOLOM SYNAGOGUE      Frank Lloyd Wright

## **Colloquy for Our Time**

● Paul Ramsey, Jr.

- A. Spring may come  
B. Despite the fervor  
Of the new god plowing Westward?  
Where the bullocks heave  
The heavy steel,  
Too strong for man or beast in man  
That slumbered?  
Our sins and days are numbered.  
A. But Spring may come regardless,  
Light on light living,  
Taking sustenance  
B. From a pig's mind, from a sow's ear  
A. Regarded  
As the answer of the pain  
Where the bullocks sigh  
For lasting rain  
B. Unguarded  
By the light that shored our dying  
Wind that clapped us Westward  
To a shore's end  
A. and B. Discarded.  
A. But Spring may come more clearly  
Than mimosa froth in sunshine  
Without deceit to rear us  
From that end in fond defilement  
None the less  
B. Heart may run to terror  
And the loud lips bless  
The brazen arms and armies  
None the less.  
From the pitch of all perfection man could choose defilement.

## **Augustine**

● **Brother D. Adelbert, F.S.C.**

Here in my jungle heart,  
Ringed with armadillian fear,  
I clench my loves.

Here in my night my blood  
Coiling these carnose vines,  
Drips in fire.

In Cyprian dusk,  
Where pervigilian memory  
Nods my pain,  
I, covert, await your blow  
Against my fear.

Why are you mute,  
When thunder, flame, and night  
Crouch to your voice?

Why so still,  
Your eyes pointing my thoughts,  
Burning my heart?

## **My Son**

● **John Felt**

Steven made me promise  
I'd wake him when the train came in;  
my arms among his dangling limbs,  
I let him grow akimbo.

When I woke him  
he fell asleep again,  
until a whistle blew him wide-eyed  
into a big black beetle,

where he stood,  
dizzy with fright and courage,  
nose against the window,

leaning for a way out.

# The Terrible Tower Unlocked

● Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F.

I have heard the key  
Turn in the door once and turn once only  
We think of the key, each in his prison  
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.  
(T. S. ELIOT, *The Waste Land*)

THROUGH the voice of Count Ugolino, that anguished figure borrowed from Dante's *Inferno*, Eliot in *The Waste Land* offers a dramatic statement of the loneliness which the terrestrial hell of his own times forces upon its inhabitants condemned to solitary confinement. He is far from being the only American writer — in 1925 Eliot could still safely be termed American — to acknowledge this imprisonment, nor has he been the only one to try, through technical experiment and exploration into the modern predicament, to fashion a key which might unlock the terrible tower.

One value, then, which contemporary American literature seeks is communication. The need of the human person in all his uniqueness to know others as they really are and to be known by them, together with his even more basic need of knowing himself so that he can communicate, is fundamental.

One may wonder just how the theme of the "terrible tower" in recent American literature can be called a search for the value of communication. The twenty-three-year-old critic Stuart Holroyd, in his interesting book *Emergence from Chaos*, suggests the answer when he says: "Nothing can be said to really exist until we are conscious of the existence of its opposite." As in the ontological argument for theism — that the idea of God requires His existence — so the terrestrial hell of those who are forced to live locked in the self, separated from others by lovelessness, gives rise to its opposite concept, the New Jerusalem, whose citizens communicate through love. We begin truly to understand our isolation only when we believe in the existence of its opposite, communication. If communication were not a possibility, even here and now in our divided world, its absence would not be so dreadful. The very fact that Hemingway could plunder John Donne's sermon for the truth that "no man is an island," taking from it the title for the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, is at least a straw in the wind regarding the value of shared lives as this value is represented in contemporary American letters.

Indeed, communication is a good that has been highly advertised in this century. Not only creative writers but industry, government, and education have concerned themselves with that value. True, the term means something different in these last three instances from what it means to the writer; it undergoes a debilitation, surely, when used in reference to many

of the freshman college courses bearing that label. But the widespread currency of the word reveals the deep hold that this concept has upon our century.

We all feel this aching urge to communicate: to understand others and to be understood by them, to put into words the experiences that stir us most profoundly (joy, sorrow, fear, wonder in the face of the mysteries around and within us). No suffering is more painful than the inability to communicate. Many a person has experienced, as life goes on, the isolation caused when someone, to whom formerly he could bring every trouble or joy, seems suddenly remote, and he is left as if frozen, unable to reach across the distance.

Actually, this chasm may be only an apparent one. Because of the impenetrability shrouding each unique human spirit or because of the activity into which contemporary life plunges individuals, the need to communicate goes unrecognized. Words are either inadequate or unsaid because the moment for quiet exchange of confidence is crowded out by circumstances. The average person has undoubtedly had at least some crises when this isolation closed in upon him. Writers more than other men feel the need to share, but all men are driven by the desire to communicate, a consequence of their nature as the only creature capable of rational speech.

Besides longing to impart his innermost being to another, man feels a desire to receive such a gift from the other; he longs to be confided in, so that the mutual world once experienced as a good may be recovered from pressures inconsequential, perhaps, but strong enough to serve as divisive forces.

This longing to communicate as mirrored in modern literature (specific instances will later be given) is nothing new. Indeed it is a result of our identity as persons, or as Jean Mouroux so accurately puts it in his book *The Meaning of Man*, as "embodied spirits." In this same volume he says:

We can never utter ourselves fully, and when it comes to deep and intimate confidences, they have to be mainly divined. Words are desperately inadequate. They are social signs, and the trouble is that we never wholly resemble anyone else . . .

The modern American writer feels these limitations which the body imposes, but he is not resigned. In considering his problem, we are faced with a double aspect of communication. First, there is the very structure of his work itself, made out of symbols which must also serve for our use as daily verbal expression of thought, a use which tends to enervate it for his needs. Secondly, there is his explicit recognition of the failure of language as he makes of this failure a major theme in his writing, together with its corollary theme centered about the refreshing of language so that human beings may once more share a spiritual as well as a physical world. The effort to annihilate outworn modes of communication and to replace them by better ones has led to the interior monologues of William Faulkner, to the thematic integrations of Pound and Williams, and to the critical pronouncements on this topic by the last two mentioned. Though the problem in its general sense is no newer than the Fall in Eden, the isolation of modern man has pushed it to the foreground, giving it an immediacy

that would have seemed strange to Sophoclean Greece, Augustan Rome, or medieval Paris — three examples of shared worlds.

William Carlos Williams is a poet whose attention has been consistently fixed upon communication. His key to the tower will be arrived at, he hopes, through an analysis in the breakdowns of the language and an experimentation with making it over into something new and effective. He traces failures in language throughout the whole history of the New Jersey city which serves as central metaphor for his long poem *Paterson*. The very first sentence announces his search: “‘Rigor of beauty is the quest. But how will you find beauty when it is locked in the mind past all remonstrance?’” The language that should express the torrent in the mind of man fails him. This truth receives its most poignant highlighting in the sentimental, over-written description in Book One of the death of Mrs. Sarah Cumming, in a “false language pouring — a language (misunderstood) pouring (misinterpreted) without dignity, without minister, crashing upon a stone ear.” Because the language has become “stale as a whale’s breath,” there is a chasm between words and events, a “divorce,” as Dr. Williams calls it. Language has been corrupted even as the dye-works of this silk center of Paterson have corrupted the Passaic River. Like Ezra Pound, Williams feels the urgency to invent, to “make it new” in order to put into language the torrential stream of consciousness that constitutes life for modern man.

Eliot is another poet who sees and stresses the difficulty of wrestling thus with language to subdue it to pattern. He knows that

Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision . . .

Yet he knows, too, that there can be a “Music heard so deeply/That you are the music,” and ultimately that is what he wishes his *Quartets* to be — a pattern that can elicit perfect communication.

For a third American poet, Hart Crane, the sea and the bridge as symbols are taken as keys to this terrible tower of the isolated ego. Cursed by sundered parentage, Crane had long since ceased to hope — at the time he jumped off the *Orizaba* to his death by water — for any genuine communication within the uneasy triangle of his family; and his excesses during his last years had more or less cut him off from achieving it elsewhere. In “*Voyages*” he admits his failure to penetrate the uniqueness of the other: “Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know.” Yet by his concept of reality as the Word — the “imaged Word” of *Voyages V* or the Word of the “Proem” to *The Bridge* — he shows his yearning towards that final communion, “the unbetrayable reply/Whose accent no farewell can know.” The entire sweep of his “Bridge” is a struggle to unite the disparate: time and eternity, life and death, but most of all self and the not-self; that struggle climaxes in the exultant Ave — “One Song, one Bridge of Fire!” which concludes the final section of “*Atlantis*.” The very title of the *Bridge* reveals how important to Crane was this connection of mind with mind, of man with God.

Today each man constructs his own world and then finds himself

captive within it; there seems, all too often, to exist no bridge to the other. How did such captivity come about? Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* offers a glimpse at this modern condition, as well as a prophecy, in the words of his saintly character Father Zossima, as the priest nears his death:

All mankind in our age have split up into units, they all  
keep apart, each in his own groove; each one holds aloof,  
hides himself and hides what he has, from the rest, and  
he ends by being repelled by others and repelling them  
. . . But his terrible individualism must inevitably  
have an end, and all will suddenly understand how un-  
naturally they are separated from one another.

Individualism has been building up since the Renaissance; what appears to be its opposite, collectivism, actually is only its colossal twin, the single individual magnified to monster proportions. Yank in O'Neill's play *The Hairy Ape*, repelled by others and repelling them, goes on searching for some way to belong, to communicate with others, until finally, defeated, he retreats into a gorilla's cage at the zoo, only to be crushed to death by the beast, to whom he is an "outsider." Like Thomas Wolfe's character Eugene Gant, Yank finds out he can't go home again: primitivism is no longer an answer at this stage of our human development. No play of the century, perhaps, concentrates so earnestly upon the need to share, to know and to be known. Few writers have dramatized so pessimistic an outcome to this struggle.

In addition to the worldwide rise of individualism and the collapse of any true community, the fact that American philosophy, from Revolutionary days and even before, has in general been idealistic has played its role in shutting off person from person. The greatest of the earlier literary idealists, Emerson, supplied a motto for his poet-descendants in the title of his essay, "Self Reliance." If each person dwells in the center of an insubstantial world, it logically follows that he will rely most on his own mind as "creating" that world. Wallace Stevens best represents literary idealism in twentieth-century America. Recognizing his isolation, he tried (how successfully, the future will say) to overcome it by means of his blue guitar, through it harmoniously ordering his ideas, which to him were the true reality. But despite his achievement, Stevens has to admit that we live in "an island solitude," and in more than a planetary sense. The stress on a Platonic character of being, which Stevens exemplifies, has elevated imagination to the prominence it holds today both in poetic theory and in American philosophy. By imagination, the shaping spirit, poets like Stevens can contribute order to the ever-changing and shapeless ocean of the real; through poetry the superior person at least (the artist) can escape or try to escape the metaphysical loneliness which haunts his age.

We have touched on three causes of the failure to communicate: the breakdown in the verbal medium, individualism, and American idealism. Another cause is the rarity in our world of self-knowledge. How can a man communicate his innermost being if he does not understand it himself? Psychoanalysis has accented the problem of self-knowledge in regard to the abnormal person, but it remains a problem for the normal as well. About

this cause for isolation Jean Mouroux, quoted earlier, writes: "If moreover two human beings can never apprehend each other directly, that is due above all to this: that none has any clear intuition of himself." The soul, for all its vital influence in animating the body, is a mystery. In recent decades autobiographical works in several genres have shown the search for this third requisite, an understanding of self.

Eugene O'Neill's *A Long Day's Journey into Night* is one of the finest attempts to assess how all that has happened to an artist has contributed to what he is. This piercing analysis is an experiment in seeing the facts which concur to form a life; if O'Neill had not the time nor the wisdom to look as deeply as a philosopher might have into the circumstances of his past, at least he attained a degree of understanding which through his craft he was able to share with other human beings.

Sometimes it is through the artist that others, both the normal and the abnormal, learn to understand self; through him, also, their uniqueness is communicated, as indeed their nature demands that it be, lest they suffocate in frustration. Sherwood Anderson creates George Willard of Winesburg, Ohio, who enters into the secret of the life led by each of his small-town grotesques. George himself is not able to find the joy of seeing himself understood except, perhaps, briefly in "Sophistication," where his spring-time exaltation coincides with that of another human being. Yet to some degree he is able to explore the mystery of the other and thereby stands as the symbol of Anderson himself, and also of any writer of fiction who seeks to break down the barrier of uniqueness.

Thomas Wolfe's Eugene Gant, Kafka's Gregor Samsa, and other thinly disguised self-portraits of their makers point up the agony to communicate as seen by the artist in particular. After all, the artist is the man who is most keenly aware of the value involved in the attempt to know and to be known. In his approach to life as reflected in the artist-characters he creates, the artist tends all too often to be an island because the refinement of his spirit and the depth of his commitment to an ideal contrast with less noble elements in his fellow men, with whose attitudes his own seem irreconcilable. In his book *Emergence from Chaos* Stuart Holroyd comments on such isolation in these words: "The artist is by nature and tradition the upholder of supernatural values, and in an age when material values are predominant, he becomes cut off from the majority of his fellows." Franz Kafka has perhaps best shown this alienation of the artist in his hero of *Metamorphosis*, the human cockroach Gregor, as well as in his short story, "The Hunger Artist." The heroes in "Paul's Case" by Willa Cather and "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" by Conrad Aiken, to return to American literature, may also be considered types of the artist who is forced into death by his inability to communicate.

Our failure to communicate with each other is at bottom the dark shadow of a greater failure, whereby man can no longer (or so he thinks) communicate with God. In the final analysis none but its Maker can know the human soul. As Mouroux tells us: "Never can two souls apprehend each other directly. They embrace only through an intermediary: through eyes or a smile; through words or a pressure of the hand; even through total surrender of the body,—but always *through something*." To modify the

title of R. P. Blackmur's last book of criticism, they must often rely on gesture as language; God's communication with them in the sacramental system takes the same form. To be united with God, as brought out in the Eucharistic liturgy, is for Christians to be united with one another. Christian existentialism, in contrast to the loneliness of atheistic existentialism, is centered around man's experience of God. Indeed, as Holroyd says: "Since Kierkegaard's day the purpose of existentialism has been to keep open the way to the Absolute in the face of the materialism of the modern world" (italics his). This statement critic Holroyd follows with Heinemann's definition of the existentialist aim: "The liberation from estrangement." We have all heard enough of late about the "outsider" to know what estrangement is being referred to.

W. H. Auden, frequently called an existentialist, is a good illustration of a poet who has featured loneliness in his verse throughout all the stages of his career. Since 1940, it is true, his sense of loneliness appears to be lessened through his discovery of the Christian God. He and his school of poets in the thirties rather prided themselves on their exiled condition, superior people in a commonplace world. In an essay, "Criticism in a Mass Society," Auden says: "The lack of communication between artist and audience proves the lack of communication between all men; a work of art only unmasks the lack which is common to us all, but which we normally manage to gloss over with every trick and convention of conversation; men are now only individuals who can form collective masses but not communities."

For Auden, the unlocking of the terrible tower will not be achieved by any key forged by literary means alone. Since all aspects of life converge, all must be transformed, he feels, by love if communication is to result, if communities are to replace collective masses. "We must love one another, or die" as did Count Ugolino and his sons, starved to death in the tower; despite the obstacles raised by original sin, each of us must, Auden asserts, take to ourselves his warning: "You shall love your crooked neighbor/With your crooked heart." A defect in love has always been for Auden the root of our disasters. Love he conceives as threefold: Eros; then Agape, by which he means unselfish Christian love, the symbol for which is Holy Communion; and finally the Logos, Love incarnate. The second is the first transformed; the union of second and third, Agape and Logos, will shatter our separate isolations and bring about on this earth that communication which Father Zossima expected, the search for which forms no inconsiderable theme in modern American literature.



## Contributors

A DE BETHUNE has dedicated her talents to the designing and decorating of churches. Born in Belgium, she has been a citizen of the United States for many years. She works in almost every artistic medium, from stained glass, wood engraving and sculpture, to fresco, tempera painting with gold leaf, mosaic, ceramic, metal work, and calligraphy. MARION MONTGOMERY'S fiction, poetry, and articles appear in many recent and current periodicals. At present he is working on a novel. IVAN MESTROVIC'S high relief statue of Mary is on the North Apse of The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D. C. He is Professor of Art at the University of Notre Dame. SISTER M. BERNETTA QUINN, O.S.F., authored *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* and *Give Me Souls*. This summer she will be teaching courses in poetry at the Catholic University of America. AUGUST DERLETH hopes to complete a chronicle of life in prose and poetry of Sac Prairie, Wisconsin. ROBERT WIGGINS has a novel under way and a notebook full of story ideas. He is Assistant Professor of English at the University of California. PAUL RAMSEY, JR., of Atlanta, Georgia, had a poem in the March issue of *four quarters*. EDWARD D. STONE, designer of The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the U. S. Embassy in New Delhi, the U. S. Pavilion at last year's Brussels' Fair, and many other buildings, believes that good design is good business. GEOFFREY JOHNSON'S home in Dorset, England, is known as "Byways." BROTHER ADELBERT, F.S.C., Assistant Professor of English at La Salle College, has contributed many of his poems to *four quarters*. GENEVIEVE K. STEPHENS published a poetic drama in a recent issue of *Experiment*. FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S Beth Sholom Synagogue, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, masses tentlike forms to symbolize Mt. Sinai. DOLORES KENDRICK is a teacher in the Washington, D. C., school system. BROTHER F. JOSEPH, F.S.C., Assistant Professor of English at La Salle College, has articles in several academic journals. E. J. NEELY is at work on his second novel, an illustrated poem for children, and several short stories. REVEREND RAYMOND ROSELIEP is Professor of English at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa. JOHN FELT lives in Missouri.

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